Episode 1.7

STAR WARS
REBELLION

"THE MEANTIME"

by

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STAR WARS: REBELLION

"THE MEANTIME"

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE – ABOVE CORUSCANT

The capital of the Galactic Empire is burning. A thousand different starships are leaving the planet, moving past dying Star Destroyers and Imperial *Carrack*--class Heavy Cruisers.

EXT. CORUSCANT - INDETERMINATE TIME

The buildings of the city without end are devastated, a jagged skyline against a background of fire and smoke.

All the sky transports and air taxis are gone. There is no traffic except for a few TIE Fighters, scattered through the skies and firing on unseen enemies.

A slowly rolling Consulate Ship smashes into an arching bridge, the whole of the destruction falling into the courtyard of the Emperor's Square. At the edge of the Emperor's Square is the Imperial Palace itself, its spires broken and exposed. Nothing can escape the inferno.

A section of the courtyard breaks off and falls into the lower levels of the city. Statues along its edge fall with it, or topple over to crash their upper bodies onto floating landing ports, ruined and unintentional bridges.

FOLLOW ONE STATUE as it plummets into the darkness of the depths of Coruscant.

EXT. CORUSCANT - LOWER LEVEL - INDERMINATE TIME

A black-cloaked man strides through a forgotten section of the city. He hugs a grimy railing as the statue falls past his bridge to disappear into the abyss.

Failing waste mass-drivers erupt beside the other side of the bridge, automated garbage disposals still launching the refuse of the capital into orbit. The man looks down into the gaping maw of a waste mass-driver, seeing another compacted sphere of toxic minerals and irradiated alloys rising through a series of electromagnetic accelerator fields. He backs his head away from the edge as the sphere shoots into the sky. He watches it form a wake tunnel in the smoke. For a second, Shen Endigo can see the stars.

Endigo's hood drops back, exposing his face. He holds up a non-metal hand to it and feels the difference in his aspect: no cybernetic parts, his eyes and ears intact. He even has a small bit of hair, cropped short.

HULDA CAULP (O.S.)
Shen, come on. You mean you can't do any better than this?

Endigo looks over. At the other end of the bridge is the corpse-body of Hulda. His first mate's furry skin has rotted away in places, and he has a large burn across his armored uniform. Hulda points up.

High above them, a TIE Fighter EXPLODES. An X-Wing soars through the fireball.

HULDA CAULP (CONT'D)
I mean, really. We don't even make it this far.

ENDIGO
What?

HULDA CAULP
In fact, the war doesn't even make it this far.

The Endigo notices that *The Long Haul* is behind Hulda on a rust-encrusted landing platform. He smiles when he sees it.

HULDA CAULP (CONT'D)
Worse part, time comes, we don't even get mentioned in the holo-disks--

ENDIGO
What's wrong with you?

Hulda looks down at himself, smirks, and shrugs.

HULDA CAULP
That's my point, Shen. We all die. So you can quit dreaming about this. I just get dusted before the rest of you.

ENDIGO
Bre?

HULDA CAULP
So I'm not the only omniscient one in these puerile theatrics--
(looking back up)
Sorry. 'Vision.'
(beat)
This really <u>is</u> awful, you know? You think highly of yourself.
(back to Endigo)
Teacher's pet, I guess.

ENDIGO
Shut up. You're just me right now, so answer my questions. What about Bre? What about Mede?

HULDA CAULP
Dead, and dead-- but that's years down the road-- you want to know how it <u>really</u> happens? There's this kid, see--

ENDIGO
You can change what happens. I know that much.

HULDA CAULP
Okay, then. Here's some advice. Don't ever tell Bre the truth about yourself. When you <u>do</u>, you don't <u>ever</u> get her back. Got me? Now, let's go.

INT. *THE LONG HAUL* - MAIN HOLD

Hulda and Endigo are the only ones in the space-tug's hold. Endigo looks around at the ship fondly. Hulda reaches out a dead hand and pulls up a planet on the holoprojector.

Endigo removes his cloak. He has no metal parts at all. Hulda looks up and frowns.

ENDIGO
Don't start. What, you want me to change you, too?

HULDA CAULP
You couldn't if you tried. Me, I'm the warning. You, you're just a longing.

ENDIGO
Where are we going?

HULDA CAULP
Temporal disruptions in the main harmonic--
(looking up at Endigo)
Cut it out. You know I don't talk like that.

ENDIGO
You do <u>think</u> like that.

Hulda types something into the holoprojector. Hyperlane vectors appear. He presses a button repeatedly, scrolling through them.

HULDA CAULP
I'd never mouth it out, though. You're making me sound like an idiot here.

ENDIGO
So where are we going?

HULDA CAULP
And stay out of my head. Rude.

Endigo looks at the planet above the holoprojector, examining it with some concern. Hulda raises his eyebrows.

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE CORUSCANT

The Long Haul leaves the burning system of Coruscant behind, jumping into hyperspace.

INT. *THE LONG HAUL* - MAIN HOLD

Hulda has taken a seat at the high chair over the holoprojector. Endigo looks up at him, waiting for an explanation. Hulda sighs.

HULDA CAULP
Okay, look, something's interfering with your fantasy. Usually, you do that stupid future fiery triumph thing...
(beat)
...unless you do the other one.
(beat)
Today, though, something wants to show you the past.

ENDIGO
The other one is the past.

HULDA CAULP
Not yours this time.

ENDIGO
Fine. How long will it take to get there?

HULDA CAULP
Well, if you could quit thinking in analogies we could be there now.

ENDIGO
(beat)
What did you mean about Bre? Not getting her back.

HULDA CAULP
That's a long time from now. May never happen. Forget you ever mentioned it.

EXT. SPACE - ABOVE UNKNOWN PLANET

A Star Destroyer hangs in orbit around an olive moon. In the distance are other satellites of the gas giant that fills most of the view.

The Long Haul drops out of lightspeed near the Star Destroyer.

A *Lambda*--class Shuttle is already dropping down toward the planet. *The Long Haul* follows its descent.

EXT. BOG PLANET - SWAMPLANDS - DUSK

The Long Haul has found a stable area of the swamplands to land on. The loading ramp opens. Endigo (cloak back on) and Hulda come out and look around. Hulda points out the Imperial Shuttle and then pats Endigo on the back. He heads back to *The Long Haul.* Endigo turns around.

ENDIGO
Hey, where’re you going?

HULDA CAULP
The ‘something’ doesn’t want me here.

ENDIGO
But you’re me.

HULDA CAULP
Connect the dots, Shen.

ENDIGO
Stay with me. That’s an order.

HULDA CAULP
Look. My leaving is just another analogy. Obviously, it can’t chip away at the whole of you, or you’d be coming, too. Now go on. Go watch.

Hulda starts to go back up the ramp.

ENDIGO
Wait.

HULDA CAULP
What?

Beat.

HULDA CAULP (CONT'D)
What?

ENDIGO
I'm not going to let you die.

HULDA CAULP
Which 'you' are you talking about?

ENDIGO
You. Hulda.

HULDA CAULP
Told you. We all die. Better people come along and do the rest.

ENDIGO
Do we even... pave the way, at least?

HULDA CAULP
Not really.

ENDIGO
That's too bad.

HULDA CAULP
Tell me about it. Mede and Destri go out nicely. Bre is pivotal, but no one ever finds out. Bahk-lun-Sool and Kilmo Kane, they end up incinerated. Skatuhl betrays us. Well, not really. Don't go hard on her when she does, Shen.
(beat)
And I, well... I get it the worst.

ENDIGO
Which 'I' are you talking about, Hulda?

Hulda considers it, but then enters *The Long Haul* without answering. The space-tug lifts off as Endigo walks away.

EXT. BOG PLANET - CLEARING - DUSK

Endigo climbs a vine-covered rise to look over a clearing. A swampy sludge lake takes up most of the valley, bubbling in places.

A small Old Republic transport has crashed into the sludge. Its hatch is open, however, and Endigo can see no one in the cockpit.

On the opposite end of the clearing is the Imperial Shuttle. Stormtroopers are guarding it. Beside them are several other black-robed men and women.

One turns to look back at the Old Republic transport. Endigo sees a lightsaber hanging from the figure’s belt.

Endigo tries to sort it all out and then sees what the figure is looking at: a trail of footprints. Multiple sets.

EXT. BOG PLANET - GROVE - DUSK

Endigo loses the trail near a dark grove of twisted trees. Suddenly a JEDI MASTER and his PADAWAN appear before him. The Jedi Master immediately ignites his lightsaber and stands in a guard position.

JEDI MASTER
Go. I’ll take this one.

Endigo holds up his hands and back away. The Padawan looks terrified. He pulls on his master’s sleeve.

PADAWAN
Master! They’re here!

The Jedi and his apprentice retreat to the grove. The Padawan pulls out his own lightsaber and ignites it. They look around, the Padawan trying to calm himself.

JEDI MASTER
Quiet your mind.

Dark-robed figures converge on them. Stormtroopers approach as well, with Darth Vader in front of them.

VADER
Tell us where they are and I will make this swift. I still admire you, Master Chun-Shun-Dai.

JEDI MASTER CHUN-SHUN-DAI
(to Padawan)
Do your best to forget.

The Jedi Master charges Vader, who parries Chun-Shun-Dai's lightsaber with his own. They begin to duel. The Padawan hesitates to join the battle, looking around at all the black-robed figures around him. When he spots Endigo he becomes furious. The Padawan runs at Vader's back, but the Dark Lord holds a hand up and he falls. The Padawan's lightsaber burns a hole in the ground. Vader and Chun-Shun-Dai lock their sabers together.

VADER
Your pupil, then, if not you--

JEDI MASTER CHUN-SHUN-DAI
(to Padawan)
Forget their names! Erase their faces from your--

VADER
I will assure them it was not his fault.

JEDI MASTER CHUN-SHUN-DAI
(to Padawan)
You <u>are</u> strong enough!

Vader pulls the Padawan's lightsaber out of his hand with the Force and catches it. With Chun-Shun-Dai's weapon already locked, Vader uses the Padawan's to slice the Jedi Master in half.

The Padawan tries to catch his breath. He looks up to see Vader above him, holding two lightsabers. The Dark Lord crosses them into an X in front of the Padawan's neck.

VADER
Now, young Padawan, we shall talk about your own fate.

INT. STAR DESTROYER *ATONEMENT* - DETENTION CELL

Endigo wakes up, his cybernetic eye coming online a second later. He lifts a metal hand to his transceiver ear.

ENDIGO
Hulda?

EXT. SPACE - UNKNOWN SECTOR

Hulda is in a spacesuit, working with a soldering-torch on the outside of the *Atonement*'s hull. Behind him, several other of the ISD's technicians remove spent coolant cells and replace them with new ones. Hulda lifts his wrist comlink.

HULDA CAULP
(garbled)
Can't really talk now, Shen.

INT. STAR DESTROYER *ATONEMENT* - DETENTION CELL

Endigo sits up and feels the stubble on his face.

ENDIGO
How come?

HULDA CAULP (V.O.)
(garbled)
Mede's got us on overtime. Rebellion's still having the energy crisis. I'm late for a briefing already.

ENDIGO
Okay. Never mind.

HULDA CAULP (V.O.)
(garbled)
No, I'm sorry. What's up?

ENDIGO
(beat)
Nothing. Just watch yourself. On the next mission, I mean. Whatever it is.

EXT. SPACE - UNKNOWN SECTOR

Hulda stops soldering and frowns.

HULDA CAULP
(garbled)
You want to talk about something?

ENDIGO (V.O.)
No. It’s okay.

INT. STAR DESTROYER *ATONEMENT* - DETENTION CELL

Endigo leans back against the wall and sighs.

ENDIGO (CONT’D)
Detention’s getting to me, is all.

Endigo’s eyes then stray to the door.

Beat.

INT. STAR DESTROYER *ATONEMENT* - DETENTION BLOCK

Outside Endigo’s detention cell, Moon is mopping the floor. He frowns when a Detention Guard won’t move his feet. Moon gives him a look, gets nothing in return, and then mops around him, muttering.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE – UNKNOWN SECTOR

The Star Destroyer *Atonement* is on the move.

INT. STAR DESTROYER *ATONEMENT* - SUBSECTION EIGHTEEN

Admiral Mede walks into the briefing room in subsection eighteen. Destri already has the holoprojector on, bringing up schematics of four bases scattered across four different planets.

Bre, Moon, Two-Tau, Skatuhl, Cull, Ube Tonnit, the Jix Brothers, Dewey Selko, the Technician, COMMANDER AVARESE, an old veteran human Rebel Soldier, assorted other Rebel Troopers and Starfighter Pilots are already present.

Hulda comes in with the lower half of his spacesuit still on, followed by Efdee. Hulda hands the Technician a datapad and points out several systems checks on it. Mede takes the podium.

MEDE
1400 hours means 1400 hours, Mr. Caulp.

HULDA CAULP
Aye, sir. Can I use problems with the coolant manifolds as an excuse?

MEDE
No. Captain?

DESTRI
Alliance High Command has ordered a galaxy-wide radio silence to all cells. Do not ask about the details, as the Admiral already has. A full disclosure was not forthcoming. It is our suspicion that Intel is trying to flush out informants within the Alliance.

MEDE
All open channel transmissions must be cleared through the Check Officer on the bridge. Check with your command team leaders for the appropriate encryption codes. Hulda, I must also ask you to refrain from speaking to Mr. Endigo until he is released from detention.

HULDA CAULP
Aye, sir.

DESTRI
What this means is the *Atonement* is cut off from the rest of the Rebellion. This should worry you long enough until you realize what we are to going to do in the meantime. The four planets you see in front of you are sources of energy. We will hit them all in the next eight days. In order, they are: Ord Mantell, Ryloth, Lur IV, and Elom.

Hulda, Cull, and Skatuhl look at each other. Bre leans over to Hulda.

BRE
What?

MEDE
Officer Bre, the concern you read on their faces is that these four systems are either directly or indirectly under the control of the Combine.

HULDA CAULP
May I ask why we--

MEDE
No. Another instruction handed down from High Command is that we were not to attack any military targets of the Empire until further notice.

HULDA CAULP
Therefore we attack the second most dangerous organization we can find?

MEDE
We’re not attacking the Black Sun Syndicate, the CSA, the Hutt Ring, or the Hapes Cluster. The Combine’s threat level ranks below all of the above.

HULDA CAULP

I beg to differ. Sir.

MEDE
Noted. The Captain has your individual assignments. I expect tactical profiles on my desk at 1800 hours.

Mede starts to exit.

HULDA CAULP
Admiral?

MEDE
Endigo has another two weeks in the brig, Hulda. Don’t ask again.

Hulda sighs and looks up at Destri. Mede exits.

DESTRI
All right, people. Ord Mantell. Hulda and Bre are primaries. Selko, your squadron and mine are backup.
(tapping a button)
Schematics and simulator scenarios are already loaded into your datapads. Get to work on your operation profile. Next up: Ryloth--

Destri’s voice FADES as we

QUICK CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE – ABOVE ORD MANTELL

FOLLOWING TIE BOMBER as it dives through the spacelanes above the graying junkyard world of Ord Mantell. It dips beneath a Corellian Passenger Liner and over a regulated course of commuter transports.

SPACE CONTROL OFFICER (V.O)
Unidentified starfighters, you have deviated from your assigned flight paths. Repeat: you have deviated from your assigned flight path. Ord Mantell is a protectorate--

BRE (V.O.)
SELKO!

SPACE CONTROL OFFICER (V.O)
Local militias and sector security have already been notified.

TIE BOMBER SELKO (V.O.)
We’re coming, Officer Bre.

PULL BACK to see the TIE Bomber followed by a pair of Rebel Y-Wings, all madly diving through the orbital traffic to reach the planet’s atmosphere.

SPACE CONTROL OFFICER (V.O)
This is your last warning.

EXT. ORD MANTELL - TEN MILE PLATEAU - DAY

Selko and his squadron fly through a persistent brown haze, countless factories blurring beneath them. They approach the steep, rocky wall of the Ten Mile Plateau, a glittering spaceport. Turbolaser embankments open fire.

INT./EXT. SELKO’S BOMBER - DAY

Selko looks down at his tracking screen, and then back outside at the casino rows of the Plateau-- bright, flashing strips of color caught in a stretch of speed.

TIE BOMBER SELKO
We’re right on top of you, Officer Bre, but no visual.

Black and golden Skipray Blastboats veer in from behind a decorated neon water tower and take up the chase.

Y-WING PILOT ONE (V.O.)
Combine Rays at mark six and closing.

Y-WING PILOT TWO (V.O.)
Cap-class weapons, Dewey, and just built for low-at combat.

TIE BOMBER
So I guess what I’m saying is that I’d really like a visual!

BRE (V.O.)
You just ran over our heads, Selko--

INT. ORD MANTELL SEWAGE TUNNEL

Bre, Hulda, Moon, and Skatuhl are in a garbage repulsor skiff, its velocity at maximum. Hulda and Moon are at the garbage skiff controls. The tunnel is dark, and the skiff's forward lights only illuminate a few hundred meters in front of them. A cluster of energy cells strapped to the underside of the skiff creates a glowing shadow following along the water below. Bre has a comlink out.

Four Combine armored swoop bikes are behind the garbage skiff, blasting away and gaining rapidly. Skatuhl and Bre fire back at them. A swoop barely misses an L-shaped metal pipe protruding from the tunnel ceiling.

BRE (CONT'D)
(into comlink)
--we're just not street level, see?

MOON
(eyes closed)
Left.

Hulda banks left. The garbage skiff scrapes against the tunnel wall, leaving a trail of sparks. Hulda pitches right to compensate, looking over at Moon and about to scream.

MOON (CONT'D)
Obviously, you missed the passage I--

HULDA CAULP
That wasn't a passage! That was a WALL!

MOON
How can you be so sure?

Bre ducks behind the skiff's railing to speak into her comlink again.

Skatuhl blasts a Combine Soldier off his swoop bike, which zooms out from under him. He hangs suspended in its former velocity for a brief second before CRUNCHING into another

ceiling pipe.

BRE
We’re running out of tunnel, Selko!

TIE BOMBER SELKO (V.O.)
I read you.

BRE
So, like, renovate.

An EXPLOSION up ahead brings with it a fountain of daylight. Moon opens his eyes and points at it wisely.

EXT. ORD MANTELL - TEN MILE PLATEAU - DAY

A wide section of landscape outside of the city continues to collapse as Selko’s starfighters turn away from the MULTIPLE EXPLOSIONS that expose the sewage tunnels.

INT. ORD MANTELL SEWAGE TUNNEL

Hulda steers the garbage skiff up the rubble-strewn embankment. Everyone aboard starts bouncing as the skiff’s repulsor field cushion has trouble with the rocky terrain.

Moon stands up at the controls and pulls out a fencing foil, pointing it towards the lip of the wreckage.

Bre spots a proton bomb down in the debris of the sewage tunnel. She smiles.

BRE
(into comlink)
Thanks for leaving us one, Selko.

INT. SELKO’S BOMBER - COCKPIT - DAY

Selko steers starboard to see the garbage skiff emerging out of the blasted tunnel. He waves.

TIE BOMBER SELKO
Sensors picked up your guests.

EXT. ORD MANTELL - TEN MILE PLATEAU - DAY

Bre looks down into the hole and casually lines up a shot with the proton bomb while speaking into her comlink.

TIE BOMBER SELKO (V.O.)
Dud's got a timer, too, considering your aim, Officer Bre.

BRE
(sighing)
Whatever.

INT. ORD MANTELL SEWAGE TUNNEL

A blaster bolt hits the proton bomb from above. The three remaining Combine swoops are caught in the EXPLOSION.

INT./EXT. SELKO'S BOMBER - COCKPIT – DAY

Selko smiles as he pushes his ion drives to their limit.

TIE BOMBER SELKO
Lucky shot.

BRE (V.O.)
Loser.

EXT. ORD MANTELL - TEN MILE PLATEAU - DAY

Selko's squadron heads back toward the urban areas, the Combine Skiprays tailing them and firing aiming shots. The garbage skiff is a trail of dust leading away from the city.

INT. Y-WING PILOT TWO'S BOMBER - COCKPIT - DAY

Y-Wing Pilot One takes a few looks outside at the city.

Y-WING PILOT ONE
Turbolaser embankments have stopped firing.

Y-WING PILOT TWO (V.O.)
They’re afraid to hit the Rays.
Deflectors double rear anyway.

INT./EXT. SELKO’S BOMBER - COCKPIT - DAY

Selko turns his bomber sideways to avoid the swinging leg of a giant casino attraction, the Y-Wings right behind him.

TIE BOMBER SELKO
Hug dirt. And hope the Combine has too much invested in these casinos to fire on us and miss.

The starfighters drop lower, just over the air traffic and through a flashing valley-canyon of an urbanized multiplex. The Combine Blastboats stop firing and follow cautiously.

INT. Y-WING PILOT TWO’S BOMBER - COCKPIT - DAY

Y-Wing Pilot Two frowns a little as he adjusts his shield controls. He looks outside at all the frantic air traffic.

Y-WING PILOT TWO
There’s something <u>wrong</u> about this.

TIE BOMBER SELKO (V.O.)
It’s working, though. Guilt’s a privilege of the living, Gold-Two.

EXT. ORD MANTELL - TEN MILE PLATEAU - DAY

The Rebel starfighters rise out of the canyon and zip through a downtown area, flying through the latticework construction of unfinished pleasure domes.

The last Y-Wing drops a bomb as it passes beneath a skeletal dome, bringing its girders and support beams crashing down on two of the pursuing Skipray Blastboats.

INT. Y-WING PILOT TWO’S BOMBER - COCKPIT - DAY

Y-Wing Pilot Two can't help but smile. He shrugs.

Y-WING PILOT TWO
Some days, I'm saying, it just doesn't feel like we're the good guys.

INT./EXT. SELKO'S BOMBER - COCKPIT - DAY

Selko's bomber passes through the black plume of a factory smokestack at the edge of the Ten Mile Plateau. He bursts through it and pulls a hard vertical into the sky.

TIE BOMBER SELKO
And the Combine is?

INT. Y-WING PILOT TWO'S BOMBER - COCKPIT - DAY

Y-Wing Bomber two looks at his dash.

Y-WING PILOT TWO
Big Black Mariah at ten and two.
(looking out of his cockpit)
Dewey, point is we're scum stealing from other scum these days.

TIE BOMBER SELKO (V.O.)
I see her. *Mariah*: Damage Control done and done, Captain Destri. Bre's near the edge of the plateau.

DESTRI (V.O.)
We already have them on scope.

EXT. ORD MANTELL - TEN MILE PLATEAU - DAY

An ebony freighter dips INTO VIEW, picking off a Combine Blastboat.

INT. *BIG BLACK MARIAH* - COCKPIT - DAY

Destri and Ube Tonnit are at the YT-2100's cockpit controls. Selko's bombers are headed straight for them, breaking formation to let the freighter pass.

DESTRI
Good run, Selko. Head back to the *Atonement*. We'll pick up our scum.

INT. Y-WING PILOT TWO'S BOMBER - COCKPIT - DAY

Y-Wing Pilot Two grimaces as he enters the cloud layer.

Y-WING PILOT TWO
Yikes. Sorry, Captain.

DESTRI (V.O.)
Relax. Half agree with you, anyway.

EXT. ORD MANTELL - TEN MILE PLATEAU - DAY

The *Big Black Mariah* roars over the garbage skiff, decelerates, and spins around for pickup.

BRE
One down.

HULDA CAULP
(to Moon)
What exactly are you doing?

Moon looks at Hulda, frowns, and elegantly sheathes his foil. He raises his hands and rolls his eyes as if what he was doing was really quite obvious.

EXT. SPACE – ABOVE ORD MANTELL

Selko and his squadron are intercepted by more Combine Blastboats before they reach the *Atonement*, which is sitting some distance away.

Y-WING PILOT ONE (V.O.)
I say run right through them. Show them real cap-class weapons.

TIE BOMBER SELKO (V.O.)
Easy to say when you have shields, but fine. Peel.

INT. *BIG BLACK MARIAH* - COCKPIT

The freighter is already off-planet, closing fast on Selko and the Combine Blastboats.

Bre and Hulda enter the cockpit, checking over deflector shields and scanning systems. Moon enters behind them and tries to look busy with something. Destri reaches over to the communications console.

DESTRI
Combine starfighters, I urge you to really, really think about it.

EXT. SPACE – ABOVE ORD MANTELL

The Combine Blastboats disengage and move away without firing a shot. They descend back to Ord Mantell.

INT. Y-WING PILOT TWO'S BOMBER - COCKPIT

Y-Wing Pilot Two sets a course for the *Atonement*'s first hangar bay, zooming over Selko's TIE Bomber.

Y-WING PILOT TWO
What, you think no one uses that sewage system that we blew all to hell?

INT. SELKO'S BOMBER - COCKPIT

Selko steers into the second hangar bay, arcing around and letting the tractor beams pull him into the TIE suspension racks. He lets go of his flight stick and starts to pull off his gloves.

SELKO
(sighing)
Will you give it a rest already, Gold-Two? I mean, who was it blew up half the town in the simulator?

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE – ABOVE RYLOTH

Ryloth is a dry, rocky world. It orbits its sun in such a way that one side is nothing but a sweltering desert, white and dead. On the dark half of Ryloth, the lights of a widespread civilization can be seen.

The *Atonement* falls out of lightspeed, immediately launching three X-Wings and a *Lambda*--class Shuttle. All four ships angle down towards the planet's vertical penumbra zone as the Star Destroyer launches into hyperspace again.

INT. IMPERIAL SHUTTLE - COCKPIT

Cull and Commander Avarese move the Shuttle to a position among the X-Wings. Ryloth grows outside the viewports.

X-WING PILOT ONE (V.O.)
Diamond formation. Synchronizing our velocities for escort now, Commander.

COMMANDER AVARESE
Okay, boys, Ryloth. No planetary axial spin. One side a perpetual oven, one side home to its only indigenous sentient species, the Twi'leks. Sole export: a medicinal mineral known as ryll, mostly used as a bacta supplement and something that this here Rebellion is dangerously low on. Our flight path will take us into Ryloth's twilight penumbra, where the Combine has set up shop for the mineral's more popular hybrid form: a psychosomatic drug a hair less illegal than Kessel spice.

EXT. SURFACE OF RYLOTH - PENUMBRA ZONE- TWILIGHT

The Shuttle and the X-Wings plunge down towards the dusty surface of the planet. They straighten their flight paths just before impact, their sublight engines raising a huge cloud of gray dust.

INT. X-WING ONE - COCKPIT - TWILIGHT

X-Wing Pilot One is steering by his sensors since the dust outside his cockpit has obscured the terrain.

X-WING PILOT ONE
Dropping the jamming fields...now.

INT. IMPERIAL SHUTTLE - COCKPIT - TWILIGHT

Cull’s facial fur ripples with apprehension. The Bothan looks over to Commander Averese.

CULL
Dust cloud should mask us for a few more seconds. Reading two quad-laser turrets and a battery of anti-infantry cannons at the entrance.

Commander Avarese talks into a communications console.

COMMANDER AVARESE
Not much changed from the base schematics we were given except those anti-infantry cannons. Blue-Three, that’s your party.

X-WING PILOT THREE
Week’s pay I take them out in one pass.

COMMANDER AVARESE
You’re on. But let’s be courteous first.
(switching channels)
Combine factory Ryloth, this is the Rebel Alliance, acting on accordance with Senate resolution X12M-11.214.

EXT. COMBINE FACTORY - PENUMBRA ZONE- TWILIGHT

The Combine factory is a walled fortress. A Command Tower overlooks two processing plants, a barracks area, and a starship hangar. Hovering cargo sleds, loaded with barrels of ryll, are moving everywhere. A regiment of Combine Soldiers in biohazard gear quickly musters out of the barracks and onto the walls.

INT. COMBINE FACTORY COMMAND TOWER - TWILIGHT

A stern COMBINE SUPERVISOR and other Combine Soldiers study a sensor array and see the incoming Rebel starships materializing on multiple radars. They listen to Commander Avarese over the Tower's loudspeakers.

COMBINE SUPERVISOR
Ray shield the processing plants and get our fighters into the air.

COMMANDER AVARESE (V.O.)
You are hereby ordered to stand down and turn over all illegal contraband--

COMBINE SUPERVISOR
(into a console)
Keep talking. Since when does the Rebellion enforce Imperial law?

COMMANDER AVARESE (V.O.)
Considering said decree dates back to the Old Republic, I see it as pretty much a fair justification for wiping you off this planet.

COMBINE SUPERVISOR
Come on, then.

INT. IMPERIAL SHUTTLE - COCKPIT - TWILIGHT

Commander Avarese signals the X-Wings to attack speed.

COMMANDER AVARESE
What, you see us slowing down?

EXT. COMBINE FACTORY - PENUMBRA ZONE- TWILIGHT

A proton torpedo hits the center of the anti-infantry cannons, causing a chain reaction. The two laser turrets are similarly destroyed by the other X-Wings before they can even fire.

The Rebel starfighters swing up and OUT OF VIEW.

INT./EXT. COMBINE FACTORY COMMAND TOWER - TWILIGHT

The Combine Supervisor looks to his Soldiers, his hand still on the console, keeping the channel open.

COMBINE SUPERVISOR
Where the hell is our air support?!

COMMANDER AVARESE (V.O.)
The funny thing about powdered ryll is, you squint just right--

Outside the Command Tower, the Combine hangar EXPLODES.

INT. IMPERIAL SHUTTLE - COCKPIT - TWILIGHT

Commander Avarese puts down a remote detonator. Cull's fur undulates as he chuckles. He steers the Shuttle to hover over the Combine factory courtyard.

COMMANDER AVARESE (CONT'D)
--it looks a lot like grinded thermal dust-particles, huh?

CULL
Commander, you <u>sure</u> you never worked with Endigo?

COMMANDER AVARESE
No, I hate that guy.
(switching channels)
Op: Ryloth to Admiral Mede, tell Katarn and his people their cargo switch worked like a charm.

MEDE (V.O.)
That’s what we pay them for, Commander Avarese. And the Twi’leks were more than happy to oblige him.

COMMANDER AVARESE
Yeah, why slice profits with the Combine when you can just peddle this junk yourself?

EXT. COMBINE FACTORY - PENUMBRA ZONE - TWILIGHT

All around the factory the hovering cargo loaders are EXPLODING. Combine Soldiers are scattered across the factory bays, electrical systems are shorting out, and portions of the plastisteel walls are breached.

INT./EXT. IMPERIAL SHUTTLE - COCKPIT - TWILIGHT

Commander Avarese looks back into the Shuttle’s hold.

COMMANDER AVARESE
Cleanup crew.

Cull reaches over and flips a switch. There is a HISS as the Shuttle’s loading ramp opens.

COMMANDER AVARESE (CONT’D)
Showtime.

EXT. COMBINE FACTORY - PENUMBRA ZONE - TWILIGHT

Two-Tau, the Jix Brothers, and Rebel Troopers jump out into the factory courtyard. The Combine Soldiers around them are still reeling from the cargo loader explosions. They make easy targets.

INT. IMPERIAL SHUTTLE - COCKPIT - TWILIGHT

Avarese waves to the Combine Supervisor in the Command Tower. Getting his attention, Avarese points into the sky.

EXT. COMBINE FACTORY - PENUMBRA ZONE - TWILIGHT

The X-Wings are approaching the Command Tower from different cardinal points.

Cull steers the Shuttle away from the Command Tower as the starfighters launch their proton torpedoes and VAPORIZE it.

INT. IMPERIAL SHUTTLE - COCKPIT - TWILIGHT

Cull and Avarese sit back in their flight chairs as the blasterfire down in the factory starts to slow down.

CULL
Two down. But we'd better hit Lur IV soon. The Combine wises up fast.

COMMANDER AVARESE
The *Atonement* is probably already there. And Mede is handling that one.
(beat)
Why'd you ask about Shen Endigo?

CULL
Why do you hate him?

COMMANDER AVARESE
He runs his show way too reckless.

CULL
And in comparison, this was what? Restraint?

COMMANDER AVARESE
Friend of mine worked SpecForce a couple of years back. Infiltrated the Combine and got too deep into their spice operations. And it's hard to be a spy when your surface thoughts are flying around, right? So High Command picks up his distress call somewhere in the Kira Run. Get there and my friend's been spaced. Hanging in the vacuum with his mouth wide open. Way too wide open. Because the distress beacon, see, it's

in his windpipe. That's what this is.

EXT. SPACE – UNKNOWN SECTOR

A Consulate Ship moves through a sector near the Core systems.

INT. CONSULATE SHIP – BRIEFING ROOM

Senator Antilles and his protocol droid, TK-299, are in the darkened briefing room. Antilles is seated alone at a table with many seats. TK-299 walks over to a subspace radio relay and turns it on, along with the holographic imagers spaced around the ceiling.

Members of Alliance High Command materialize in the room. Mon Mothma appears first, projected into the seat meant for her. The Senator nods graciously.

SENATOR ANTILLES
Madame Chairwoman.

MON MOTHMA
Senator Antilles.

Admiral Ackbar, GENERAL DODONNA, and GARM BEL IBLIS of Corellia all appear, along with other officials. Some of their holo-displays FLICKER, bad signal feeds depending on the Consulate Ship's proximity to their separate headquarters.

Finally General Madine appears, standing, his holographic legs bisected by the seat. Madine realizes the situation and FLICKERS out, reappearing a few moments later, seated.

GENERAL DODONNA
Senators. General Madine. Madame Chairwoman.

MON MOTHMA
Good to see you again, General Dodonna.
(to Senator Antilles)
Well, Antilles, High Command is all here, except for Organa. I assume he's still... rankled by our meeting at Chantham House?

SENATOR ANTILLES
Of course not, Madame Chairwoman. Bail Organa is at the Assembly, pleading for the Emperor to reconsider the recent resolution concerning the Honoghr system. All for the show of it, I believe. The Noghri are--

MADINE
Forgive me, Senator, but I must insist we move on to matters we can actually prevent.

SENATOR ANTILLES
Well, General Madine, it was at your request that we convene, anyway. Please go on.

MADINE
General Dodonna, how are we faring with SpecForce?

GENERAL DODONNA
I have Commander Loom Carplin on the matter. He reports that all active cells near the Core systems should be secure within the next day or so. I see our radio silence measures ending within seventy-two hours, at the latest.

Madine doesn't seem satisfied, and stares at the table in front of him. Mon Mothma notices and tries to catch his eye.

MON MOTHMA
General? What is it?

MADINE
Frankly, I'm having a problem with Admiral Mede. I'm sure you've all been keeping track of his latest activities.

SENATOR ANTILLES

As far as I see it, General, Admiral Mede is following the orders we've given him.

MADINE
He was never given the authority to attack Mon Gallofree's organization.

SENATOR ANTILLES
Again, Mede is following the orders we gave him. He isn't contacting any cells, he isn't contacting us, and he isn't attacking the Empire. Moreover--

MADINE
The Combine isn't an enemy we need right now!

SENATOR ANTILLES
(patiently)
Moreover, Mede is being admirably... proactive during the lull instigated by our own security council.
(beat)
Admiral Ackbar?

ACKBAR
Yes, Senator?

SENATOR ANTILLES
How is production going on the B-Wing fighters?

ACKBAR
Slower than we anticipated, I'm afraid. It may be another Galactic Standard year before we can actually use them in a full-scale engagement.

MADINE
I see where you're going with this, Senator. Yes, Admiral Mede is watching out for the Rebellion's best interests. Yes, we desperately need the supplies he is gathering during these raids. And yes, the speed at which he is actually collecting those supplies is exemplary.

GARM BEL IBLIS
Then what exactly is your problem, Crix?

MADINE
Pardon me?

GARM BEL IBLIS
You heard me. Anyone else hear static in my audio signal?

MADINE
(heated)
You Corellian piece of--

MON MOTHMA
Enough.

SENATOR ANTILLES
(sighing)
I agree. This is starting to sound like the Imperial Senate. With the Chairwoman's permission, I'd like to adjourn this meeting. We all have better things to do than argue about the goings-on of Admiral Titus Mede.

GENERAL DODONNA
I think I know the point Madine is trying to make. It's something of a concern to myself, as well. Madame Chairwoman, if I may?

MON MOTHMA
You never have to ask, Dodonna, you know that.

GENERAL DODONNA
For all his strengths, Admiral Mede is the greatest weak link we've ever allowed into the Alliance.

Antilles sits forward, about to interrupt, but Dodonna raises his hand and begs the Senator to let him finish.

GENERAL DODONNA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Senator, but it's true. Think about it. The *Atonement* is a wandering invitation to the Rebel Base. Catch it and you catch us all.

MADINE
Exactly. Couple that with the high profile Mede is presently cultivating and what we have is--

SENATOR ANTILLES
Spare me, Madine. You use him and his Star Destroyer at every opportunity. Is this your idea of an alliance? Is this what you want-- cohorts after the victories but rivals when he's not directly under your command?

MADINE
With all due respect--

SENATOR ANTILLES
That's a quality you need to practice on, General. We are fighting this war out of respect for a past that few remember. And we are fighting it together because we respect each other.

Garm Bel Iblis smirks. Mon Mothma is staying out of it.

MADINE
Fine. Thank everyone for your time.

SENATOR ANTILLES
General....

MADINE
I've had my say. When the Combine retaliates, I hope we survive it. And should Mede or any of the one hundred and forty-four members of his crew, a crew which picks up strangers every time I 'use' his Star Destroyer, all of whom know the location of the Rebel Base, get captured, then I hope you'll help me when I'm here at Dantooine, struggling to keep the evacuation from

becoming a slaughterhouse!

Madine FLICKERS out. The remaining members of High Command look at his empty seat and consider his point silently.

EXT. SPACE – ABOVE LUR IV

The *Atonement* sits above the ice moon of Lur IV. Two Combine satellites move into range of the Star Destroyer.

INT. STAR DESTROYER *ATONEMENT* - BRIDGE

Mede is watching the moon through the viewport. A BRIDGE OFFICER enters.

BRIDGE OFFICER
Combine satellites are moving into scanning range, sir.

MEDE
Let them. We need their cameras. Captain?

Destri is back near the tactical grid, looking at the schematics of a Combine Storage Facility. She turns to the Admiral.

DESTRI
Defense is nil. I guess they figured no one would ever look here.

MEDE
It’s just the Combine’s drop-off point into the Kira Run. Hyperbarides lose their potency quickly unless you keep them at the proper temperature.

Hulda, Bre, and the Technician enter the bridge from the turbolift elevators. Mede doesn’t notice.

DESTRI
No need to explain the composition of hyperbarides to me, Admiral. I’m fam--

MEDE

I know, Captain. Just talking it through, waiting for Hulda and the Check Officer to tell me we're ready to go.

TECHNICIAN
(clearing his throat)
All of the laser transverse motors have been rerouted into the forward lateral cannon, sir.

HULDA CAULP
Cooling modulation will give us a solid beam. In other words, ready to go.

MEDE
Good. Destri, find me a two-kilometer area just outside the storage base with no life form readings.

DESTRI
Got one.

Mede looks down to a different Bridge Officer in fire control.

MEDE
Proceed.

EXT. SPACE – ABOVE LUR IV

An unbroken laser beam spears out from the Star Destroyer to the cool-white surface of the ice moon. The beam moves up and down in rapid increments as it moves steadily from left to right.

INT. STAR DESTROYER *ATONEMENT* - BRIDGE

Destri looks up from the tactical grid. The schematics have been replaced by a visual of the moon, where the laser beam is carving something into its terrain.

DESTRI

The transmission is in progress, Admiral. And their satellites are watching.

Bre walks over to stand by Mede. She notices that the Admiral has allowed himself to smile.

EXT. SURFACE OF LUR IV - DAY

From the surface, the laser beam's diameter is gigantic. It scorches the two-kilometer area, melting through the ice to hit the crust of the moon itself. A misty vapor follows the beam as it moves along, creating canyons.

PAN ACROSS to the Combine Storage Facility in the distance, where a few tiny figures are watching the process.

INT. COMBINE STORAGE FACILITY - COMMAND STATION - DAY

The FACILITY MANAGER and his AIDE watch a row of vidscreens. On one of them is the Star Destroyer. On another, the laser beam cutting through the icy surface of the moon. On another, the vector outline shapes of the satellites. And on the final, main screen: Mede's message as seen from orbit. The Aide reads it aloud.

AIDE
'Surrender.'

INT. STAR DESTROYER *ATONEMENT* - BRIDGE

Destri smiles and looks up from the tactical grid again.

DESTRI
They've accepted our terms.

MEDE
Good. Have the transports pick up the hyperbarides, Captain. We have a schedule to keep.

DESTRI
Yes, sir.

MEDE

Three down.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE - UNKNOWN SECTOR

The Star Destroyer *Atonement* falls out of hyperspace.

INT. STAR DESTROYER *ATONEMENT* - BRIDGE

Bre, Destri, Hulda, Two-Tau, Skatuhl, Selko, Commander Avarese, Cull, Ube Tonnit, the Technician, and Moon are present. Bre steps forward as the Technician brings up the Elom system on the holographic projector. A group of RED BLIPS appears near the fourth planet of the system.

TECHNICIAN
Evidently, Combine trajectory profilers have been watching the patterns of our attacks in an attempt to predict our next raid. They have increased security at three of the likeliest candidates, one of which is right on the money: Elom. The blips you see are a train of cargo transports, protected by a fleet of Dreadnaughts and heavy fighters. More cruisers are expected to arrive just before the transports attempt to move into lightspeed.

COMMANDER AVARESE
They’re trying to get the hyperbarides off-world before we can get there.

BRE
Okay, um. This is what we’re gonna do. We, I mean everyone here except me and Moon, we’re going to pounce right on

top of the Combine's whole fleet. Just as a diversion. Don't think crazy. Then the transports, see? They'll scram out of there as soon as they see the *Atonement*, right? Who wouldn't? 'Whoa! Star Destroyer!'

Bre catches her breath and tries to calm down.

BRE (CONT'D)
And then me and Moon, we're in the *Big Black Mariah*, and we, um, we get in close enough to a transport to slap a sensor lock on their hyperdrive and follow them to wherever they go, maybe like their contingency safe zone or something.

CULL
It's more likely, Officer Bre, that you'll follow them right into another well-protected area.

BRE
Erm, I don't think so. Maybe. I'm betting that the transports get all scared and just scoot into the nearest hyperlane they can find. And it's not like the Combine can be everywhere at once. If they're securing Elom this much, they're spread out all over the other two systems they think we might jump on, too. I'm willing to gamble.

HULDA CAULP
You should bring me on as your copilot.

BRE
I got Moon. And he's got special powers.

HULDA CAULP
You should bring me on as your copilot.

BRE
Hulda, how about you follow us along in an X-Wing? If you just have to back us up. You lock onto my lock and then I

guess we both go after the transports. Commander Avarese, plan out our diversion attack and get it to the Admiral along with a full operation profile of everything else. Check Officer, get us into hyperspace.

COMMANDER AVARESE
I'm on it.

TECHNICIAN
I'm on it.

Avarese and the Technician immediately exit.

BRE
Okay. I'm done. Anything else?

Bre immediately looks at Destri with an anxious half-smile.

DESTRI
Officer Bre, you're primary. If you're done, we're done.

Bre exits, grinning. She's getting the hang of this.

WIPE DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SPACE - UNKNOWN SECTOR

The Star Destroyer *Atonement* reenters hyperspace.

INT. STAR DESTROYER *ATONEMENT* - MOON'S QUARTERS

Moon's quarters are spartan and spotless. His bed is made, his floors are shining, and the walls are only adorned with hooks to hang his robe and fencing foil on. Moon grabs both of them just as the blast door to his chamber SWISHES open. Mede enters. Moon immediately stands at attention.

MEDE
As you were, Mr. Mimuné. I've come--

MOON
Did I ever thank you for your kindness in giving me this foil?

MEDE
Several times.

MOON
And wherever did you procure it again? Never mind. Once I find the proper materials, I shall construct the lightsaber I lost at Nodus and return this to you.

MEDE
You told me before you lost your lightsaber at the Battle of Jumunga.

MOON
I'm sure I've never been there.

MEDE
That's my point. I looked. There's no system named Jumunga. Now listen--

MOON
Then how could they have had a battle there? Strange. I'm afraid you'll have to solve this little mystery out on your own, Admiral. I am needed at the Elom convoy raid. I am Miss Bre's protector, you understand.

MEDE
(muttering)
Get in line.

MOON
Hmm. I sense some distrust, targeted towards myself. It must be influenced by that scrape we had on Ord Mantell. Is it my fault that Hulda does not have my Jedi reflexes, Admiral? Why, at the Battle of Jumunga, I made maneuvers like that with my eyes closed.

MEDE
Are you trying to test my patience?

MOON
No more than you are trying to test the validity of my powers, Admiral Mede.

MEDE

There <u>are</u> no Jedi--

Moon opens the blast door, cutting Mede off.

MOON
That's what you said about Jumunga.

EXT. SPACE – ELOM SYSTEM

The Combine convoy is moving through the void, Dreadnaughts and Blastboats protecting the single-file line of unarmed cargo transports. The Star Destroyer *Atonement* drops out of hyperspace right in front of them, opening fire on the nearest Dreadnaught. The Combine starship suffers a severe hull breach as it turns away from the transports to bring its own armaments to bear. The ebony YT-2100 freighter shoots out of the *Atonement*'s hangar, TIE Fighters right behind it and spreading out at such a speed that they seem like a fireworks display of sleek, gray-black insects.

Then a dozen X-Wings and Y-Wing Bombers snap into the fray from all sides, opening fire with their proton torpedoes. Soon, all sight of the starfighters in the battle is lost as EXPLOSIONS erupt at every quarter. Only the deadly and gigantic capital-class vessels can be seen; everything else is a streak, a laser, or a bright blossom of ionic fire.

The Combine cargo leader veers out of the danger zone, the transports behind it following its arc, bending like a languid limb into a full-speed curve of panic. The cargo leader launches into lightspeed.

The *Big Black Mariah* and an X-Wing ride the crest of a visible shockwave blooming out from the white-hot drive reactor EXPLOSION of a Dreadnaught, undersides reddening as they try not to lose sight of the last transport.

INT. *BIG BLACK MARIAH* - COCKPIT

Bre struggles to keep a stable vector on the transport in the wake of the explosion. The cargo transport keeps falling in and out of the view of the cockpit.

BRE
Damn shockwave. Can't get a lock.

HULDA CAULP (V.O.)
Compensate or we'll lose it. Try linking your tractor beam to your navicomputer. Snag it that way.

INT. HULDA'S X-WING – COCKPIT

Hulda dips his X-Wing beneath Bre's freighter and in front of her, hitting his afterburners. He opens fire on the final transport, damaging its engines. The transport in front of it hits lightspeed and vanishes from the battle.

HULDA CAULP (CONT'D)
She's slower now, but sensors still read you have six seconds to hook her.

BRE (V.O.)
Got it. Hyperdrives are shaking hands.

HULDA CAULP
I'll read your wake and be there soon.

EXT. SPACE – ELOM SYSTEM

At the periphery of the battle, the Combine cargo transport launches into hyperspace, dragging the *Big Black Mariah* with it. Hulda's X-Wing swings around in a long loop and then blasts into hyperspace, too.

INT. HULDA'S X-WING – COCKPIT – HYPERSPACE

The BLUE-WHITE CORRIDOR of hyperspace. Hulda hears STATIC coming over his radio.

HULDA CAULP
Say again.

Hulda's X-Wing falls back into realspace to see the cargo transports protected by three Combine Dreadnaughts.

BRE (V.O.)
Said <u>trouble</u>. As in the big variety--

EXT. SPACE – UNKNOWN SECTOR

Bre's freighter takes a direct hit by a turbolaster blast. The Dreadnaughts join into a wedge formation to block off the transports while Combine Skipray Blastboats vector in, strafing. Hulda's X-Wing speeds back the way it came.

INT. *BIG BLACK MARIAH* - COCKPIT

Bre loops her freighter around a Dreadnaught and skims along its upper hull, zipping through sensor antennae.

HULDA CAULP (V.O.)
Come on, Chori. We're out of here.

MOON
What? Are we retreating?

HULDA CAULP (V.O.)
Unless you have a better idea, Moon.

MOON
I do. At the Battle of Brinn, we--

INT. HULDA'S X-WING – COCKPIT

Laserfire obscures Hulda's view as he flees the scene.

HULDA CAULP
That was a joke, you moron. Bre, we're leaving for the rendezvous point. <u>Now</u>.

BRE (V.O.)
Don't worry. We're right behind you.

Hulda launches into hyperspace.

EXT. SPACE – UNKNOWN SECTOR

Hulda's X-Wing turns into a band of light and he's gone. Then the *Big Black Mariah* swings back around, scattering the Blastboats, to face the Combine Dreadnaughts. The freighter opens fire as it accelerates to top speed.

INT. *BIG BLACK MARIAH* - COCKPIT

Bre's face is set and determined. She spins through the crossfire with all confidence, Moon beaming beside her.

BRE (CONT'D)
Just as soon as we take care of these losers, right, Moon?

MOON
That's the spirit, my dear!

Moon stands up and pulls out his foil, its tip rattling on the viewport. The freighter is closing on a Dreadnaught.

MOON (CONT'D)
CHARGE!!!

BRE
Um. Way distracting.

MOON
Quite right. Sorry. Now, where was I?

BRE
The Battle of Brinn, I think. How did--

A Combine Blastboat dives into their way and fires a volley of proton torpedoes straight at the cockpit. Bre's eyes go wide as she SCREAMS into a

WHITE OUT.

EXT. SPACE – NEAR UNCHARTED NEBULA

A battle-damaged *Atonement* drifts somewhere, safe for the time being. Its fighters are patrolling nearby.

INT. STAR DESTROYER *ATONEMENT* – BRIDGE

Mede rubs his gloved hands together tightly. He wants to hit something. Nearly everyone that knows Bre is on the bridge except for Endigo. Destri is at the tactical grid looking at the expanding sensor rings of the patrolling fighters. Nothing. Hulda is beside her, polite enough to

pretend not to notice that she's fighting back tears. Hulda then punches a vidscreen. Everyone jumps, except for Mede.

MEDE
The secondary communications lathe is broken, Hulda. Hit that instead.

A TRILL comes from the tactical grid. Everyone jumps again.

DESTRI
It's her! Wait... she's got a whole Combine fleet in pursuit-- battle stations, everyone. Full alert!

EXT. SPACE – NEAR UNCHARTED NEBULA

The ebony YT-2100, a complete wreck, falls out of lightspeed near the *Atonement*. Then all of the cargo transports and Dreadnaughts fall out as well.

INT. *BIG BLACK MARIAH* - COCKPIT

Bre and Moon have their legs up on the cockpit controls. They smile at Destri on a vidscreen.

BRE
Hiya. Don't worry, Captain. The Combine ships are slaved to mine. And they're all powered down. We're safe.

INT. STAR DESTROYER *ATONEMENT* – BRIDGE

Everyone is dumbfounded, straining to see Bre on the vidscreen kiosk. The Technician enters.

TECHNICIAN
She's... she's right, Admiral. And I'm reading no life forms aboard the Combine vessels, either....

BRE (CONT'D)
Guess we got a little carried away. But I figure the Rebellion needs a few more Dreadnaughts, right?

HULDA CAULP
Um.

BRE
Hey, that’s my line.

INT. STAR DESTROYER *ATONEMENT* – SUBSECTION EIGHTEEN

Moon stands on top of the holoprojector table, waving his foil. Mede, Destri, and Hulda watch. Bre smiles proudly.

MOON
With poor Miss Bre knocked cold by the proton blast, I knew it was up to me to save us. Shields were but a memory, our hull barely above thirty percent, and every weapon on that freighter had breathed its last! But, yea, is this not the province of heroes? The arena endangered, the portal perilous, that vivid moment when all the knowledge you have gathered in your no little pocket of adventures becomes as crystal, a jeweled intuition, each facet a token once used elsewhere but now needed here to gel, to harden, to form into an idea, an interplay of action and earned method. My friends... it is hard for even myself to recall exactly what really transpired. I do remember steering us into harm’s way for a most devious strategy, bait for another proton torpedo, which the villain behind me did take, and which was easy enough to dodge for someone with my training. The torpedo hit the magnetic field of a Dreadnaught’s hangar-- and the Dreadnaught I meant it for, no less. I had read the minds of everyone present, you see, and knew that their fleet, one and all, answered to the captain of this particular vessel. Upon a most remarkable impact the hangar’s magnetic field dropped, and I flew us in. Now, good people, I shan’t lie to

you. There was a brief flash wherein I questioned my ability to fend off the fifty or so Combine soldiers converging upon our freighter, armed as I was with only this foil and a... a whistle.

Moon pauses. He raises his foil to his nose for effect.

MOON (CONT'D)
Fortunately, the will of the living Force is enough to assuage any fear its champions might entertain. I fought them off, as if a man of only twenty, and took the battle all the way to the helm. I met this captain and showed him his greatest fear, which I made flesh from his mind, using the... the keening of the whistle! To the Jedi, all matter is but frequency, and woe is he who lets me know the note! So did the captain understand the full extent of my power! And, lo, he was bent to share it with the rest of them! He backed away from the conjured beast and, at wit's end, opened a channel to the whole fleet. A thousand men then heard the keening. And a thousand men saw their monsters bred from naught but the air before them! Who wouldn't run from such a sight? Straight to the escape pods and to sectors all willy-nilly, so long as wherever they went their fiends might not follow. You must forgive the lack of some details-- the loss of the whistle, for example, etc., etc.-- but, as far as I can recollect, that was my part at the Battle of Elom.

INT. STAR DESTROYER *ATONEMENT* - BRIDGE

Mede and Destri stare at the empty Combine vessels outside.

DESTRI
We're standing here. We're staring right at them. Something happened.

MEDE
Yes. Something did. Four down and then some, Captain. Let’s go home.

FADE OUT.

THE END